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Head-Quarters of the Army of Mobile,

MOBILE, Dec. 11th, 1862.

CIRCULAR.]

I. An officer intrusted with the command of a Regiment is invested with authority, which renders him responsible, for the maintenance of discipline, order, and a proper system of economy in his corps: he is to exact from officers and men the most implicit obedience to regulations, and he is not only to enforce by command, but to encourage by example, the energetic discharge of duty, and the steady endurance of the difficulties and privations which are inseparable from Military service.

II. A commanding officer's authority is paramount, whether on the parade, at the mess, or in any other situation; he should give his best attention to promote a good understanding amongst the officers, by advice to the young and inexperienced, by timely interference to prevent disputes, and by taking immediate notice of any conduct likely to interrupt the harmony of the corps; he should explain to the officers, in the most forcible manner, the consequences of allowing themselves to be misled by erroneous notions, and false principles of honor, and he should encourage them in the event of any dispute or difference arising, to make him the arbiter, as the one immediately responsible for maintaining unblemished the honor and character of the corps; and his decision should be assented to, and his disposal of the question considered as final.

III. He is to discountenance any disposition of his officers to play with each other at any game for high stakes; he is to use his utmost endeavor to check any approach among the younger officers to what are termed practical jokes.

IV. He is to take frequent opportunities of examining the officers upon every point connected with their duties in the field, as to their knowledge of the "Regulations and Orders of the Army and Articles of War,"—of the forms, principles and practice of Courts Martial,—on the interior management of a Company, and of the established system of keeping its accounts.

V. He is to avail himself of every opportunity of practically instructing the officers in the duties of light infantry, and of picquets and outposts, &c., in the mode of conducting patrols, in the exercise and management of field artillery, and as far as may be practicable, in the construction of field works, &c He will, at his discretion, direct the field officers and Captains of the Regiment, and occasionally even the subalterns, to take command of the parade, and in his presence to exercise the Regiment or Battalion; and he is to encourage the subalterns officers to qualify themselves for the duties of Adjutant, both in the field and in the office.

VI Officers commanding Brigades, and reviewing Generals, are to make the most strict inquiries and careful observations in all these points; and if they discover that any officers are, from incapacity or habitual inattention, deficient in a knowledge of their duties, or indisposed to give the commanding officer the aid and support which he has a right to expect, or are otherwise conducting themselves in a manner injurious to the efficiency and the credit of the corps, they are to report the names of such officers.

VII. The instruction and improvement of his men form the most essential part of the supervision of a commanding officer; the general regulations and orders prescribe the adoption and the practice of an uniform system of exercise and drill,—and it is of the highest importance that this principle of uniformity should be strictly observed and maintained, in its most minute details.

VIII A commanding officer cannot pay too much attention to the prevention of crime, but he must bear in mind that the positive absence of crime, and not its screened existence, is the criterion of a well-established discipline. In all first offences, not of an aggravated character, mild reproof and admonition will be tried; and punishment is not to be resorted to, until a repetition of the offence shall have shown that the milder treatment has not been productive of the desired effect.

IX. Officers are to avoid reproving non-commissioned officers for any irregularity, neglect of duty, or awkwardness, &c., in the presence or hearing of the privates, lest they should weaken their authority and lessen their respectability,—unless it shall be necessary for the benefit of example that the reproof be public, or it shall have been provoked by repeated neglect or irregularity.

X. The utmost attention is required from the Captains or officers commanding Companies, to the cleanliness of the men as to their persons, clothing, arms, and accoutrements, and also as to the state of their barracks or quarters. Strict adherence to this essential point of discipline will ever tend to the health and comfort of the soldier, and at the same time promote the credit of the service.

XI. The duty attending the Colors in the field is to be performed by the Color-Sergeants; but this distinction is in no wise to interfere with the regular performance of their Regimental and Company duties They are not to be detached from their Companies nor to be employed on other service.

XII. Commanding officers will not permit the officers and men of their command to become domesticated in the neighborhood in which they may be quartered. "Nothing is more liable than this to injure the morale of the best troops. The seductions of otherwise harmless pleasures, may lead to fatal habits of remissness in duty, and the officer quietly indulging in a game of cards may receive his summons for surrender as he takes up his last trick."

By command of

Brig. Gen'l J. E. SLAUGHTER,

L. G. ALDRICH, Captain and A. A. General.

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